



BYRNE, Patrick H., *Analysis and Science in Aristotle*

Michael Vertin

Volume 55, numéro 2, juin 1999

La pensée juive au XXe siècle

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/401241ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/401241ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Faculté de philosophie, Université Laval

ISSN

0023-9054 (imprimé)

1703-8804 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Vertin, M. (1999). Compte rendu de [BYRNE, Patrick H., *Analysis and Science in Aristotle*]. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 55(2), 319–320.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/401241ar>

He displays a broad and deep familiarity with the relevant classical, medieval, and modern scholarship. And his text is well organized, meticulously developed, and lucidly written. It is my judgment that this book is likely to have an important positive impact upon Thomist scholarship, especially in the area of moral studies, and perhaps upon more general scholarly methodology as well.

Michael VERTIN

St. Michael's College, University of Toronto

Patrick H. BYRNE, *Analysis and Science in Aristotle*. Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, 1997, XXI-303 p.

Patrick Byrne is Professor of Philosophy at Boston College. From his first days as a graduate student, his philosophical outlook has been influenced profoundly by the writings of Bernard Lonergan. Hence, given Lonergan's prolonged attention to epistemology, it is not surprising that most of Byrne's published papers have been centrally concerned with epistemological topics. The present book continues this trend. However, unlike the bulk of Byrne's previous work, it proceeds less by direct systematic argumentation than by historical analysis and interpretation. Specifically, it treats certain fundamental epistemological issues by exploring just how those issues are addressed by Aristotle.

The chief findings of Byrne's eight chapters are roughly the following. First, by contrast with many past and present-day accounts of Aristotle, "analysis" for Aristotle is not fundamentally the process of reducing a whole to its parts ; rather, it is the process from parts to the intelligible whole of which they are the parts. Second, "syllogism" is the fundamental form of valid argument — the fundamental form of expressing the necessary intelligible connections between the statement with which one begins and certain other statements that may be brought to light. Third, there are, on Aristotle's arrangement, three basic syllogistic figures. All proper but problematic statements, whether compact or complex, can in principle be reconfigured in terms of these three ; and all improper statements can be manifested as improper by being shown to fail at making the intelligible connections expressed by these three. Fourth, Aristotle presents his account not simply as articulating *analysis* as the process of discerning intelligible connections between conclusions and premises but also and more basically as articulating *science* (*epistêmê*) as certain knowledge of things in terms of their causes. Fifth, on the Aristotelian account of how scientific knowledge emerges, the crucial moment is one's preconceptual grasp of what subsequently is formulated as the middle term. This preconceptually discovered intelligible connection, rather than the antecedent sensations or the subsequent concepts, is what is key. Sixth, the typical Aristotelian scientific approach is not to begin with a principle (expressed by the syllogistic major premise) and a middle term (attributed by the syllogistic minor premise) and then *deduce* a fact (expressed by the syllogistic conclusion). On the contrary, it is to begin with a demonstrable fact and then seek to *discover* a middle term and a principle in terms of which that fact may be understood. Seventh, the ultimate principle of all scientific knowing is not itself a proposition ; rather, it is *nous*, the pre-propositional background or horizon within which our knowing proceeds — at root, the self-understanding of intelligence itself. Eighth, Aristotle not only develops a methodology of analysis and science but also develops actual sciences grounded in the normativity of *nous* ; and his regular aim in these enterprises is not (despite common misconceptions to the contrary) to *demonstrate conclusions* but rather to *understand matters of fact*.

Analysis and Science in Aristotle is clearly and sensitively organized, tightly reasoned, and very well written. Substantively, although Byrne refers to Lonergan only a few times in his actual

text, it seems clear that Lonergan strongly influences his reading of Aristotle. (Indeed, he says as much in his Preface, p. xii.) Since I am not especially expert in Aristotle, I cannot anticipate how Byrne's Lonerganian reading will be received by Aristotle scholars. However, I find his astute and skillful account both thoroughly plausible and extremely illuminating. For example, he makes it seem obvious that Aristotle is concerned more with understanding than with proving, that insights are more basic for him than concepts, and that the distinction between description and explanation is pivotal even though not always clearly expressed. As one who, like Byrne, has been instructed by Lonergan's interpretation of the history of philosophy, I give this book high marks ; and I would guess that in due course it will turn out to be judged an important book by the broader philosophical community as well.

Michael VERTIN
St. Michael's College, University of Toronto

A. DENAUX et J. DICK, éd., **From Malines to ARCIC. The Malines Conversations Commemorated.** Leuven, Leuven University Press/Peeters (coll. « Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium », CXXX), 1997, 325 p.

L'année 1996 marquait le 75^e anniversaire des conversations de Malines (1921-1925) qui avaient, pour protagonistes principaux, Lord Halifax, du côté anglican, et le cardinal Mercier, pour la contrepartie catholique. Il s'agit là d'une date cruciale dans l'histoire contemporaine de l'œcuménisme. À cette occasion, plus de 400 personnes se sont rassemblées à Malines pour commémorer cet événement et envisager la suite des dialogues entre catholiques et anglicans. Le présent ouvrage reprend les communications présentées à cette occasion.

La première partie, qui comporte sept contributions, est consacrée aux conversations de Malines. Trois textes reprennent des documents d'époque : une version anglaise du célèbre *Memorandum*, préparée par Lambert Beauduin et lue par le cardinal Mercier en 1925, intitulée « L'Église anglicane unie et non absorbée » ; et les *Mémoires*, respectivement du groupe anglican et catholique, à la suite des conversations de Malines. Ces trois documents d'époque sont précédés par une mise en contexte des discussions de Malines par l'éminent œcuméniste de Chevetogne, Emmanuel Lanne : les initiatives anglicanes, les rapports entre anglicans et orthodoxes et la situation dans l'Église catholique. Cette mise en contexte du climat œcuménique de la période permet de mieux apprécier les audaces de ces précurseurs et de mieux comprendre la portée du *Memorandum*, lu par le cardinal Mercier en 1925, qui constituait une réponse explicite aux requêtes des anglicans. Enfin, J. Dick, sans doute le meilleur spécialiste de la question des Conversations de Malines, présente une bibliographie annotée des documents et des études se rapportant aux discussions. De plus, sous le titre « The Malines Conversations. The Unfinished Agenda », Dick propose ses propres réflexions sur la suite des Conversations de Malines. Inspiré par le mot de Lord Halifax, deux ans avant sa mort, « To be discouraged is a cowardice », Dick examine les possibilités réelles de l'engagement œcuménique des Églises catholique et anglicane, toutes deux appelées à croître vers l'unité, à la suite de Mercier, Halifax et les autres, mais toutes deux menacées par un retour aux démons du tribalisme qui les fait parfois retraire vers des formes anciennes ou nouvelles de fondamentalisme. Tantôt entraînées à partager des visions communes qui permettraient de dépasser la division, elles se retrouvent parfois prises aux pièges du manque de tolérance qui conduit à la polarisation qui affecte chacune de ces Églises. De part et d'autre, elles sont tentées de donner des réponses simples et sécuritaires à des questions complexes, plutôt que de manifester de l'ouverture au point de vue de l'autre. Un dernier texte, de A. Denaux, fait état des contacts œcuméniques qui se sont toujours poursuivis entre Belges et Anglais, depuis Malines.